Health and Welfare Canada
Santé et Bien-être social Canada

Status of Day Care in Canada 1990

A Review of the Major Findings of the National Day Care Study (1990)

National Child Care Information Centre
Child Care Programs Division

Canada

91-04272/

Status of Day Care in Canada 1990

A Review of the Major Findings of the National Day Care Study (1990)

National Child Care Information Centre
Child Care Programs Division

Also available in French under the title
Situation de la garde de jour au Canada 1990

Published by authority of the
Minister of National Health and Welfare

©Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1991
Cat. H74-14-1990E
ISBN 0-662-18849-7

Preface

Status of Day Care in Canada (1990) is intended to present to Canadians a general overview of day care services in Canada.

The study was undertaken by the Social Service Programs Branch, Health and Welfare Canada with the co-operation of provincial and territorial authorities.

If you have any comments on *Status of Day Care in Canada (1990)*, please contact the National Child Care Information Centre Social Service Programs Branch, Health and Welfare Canada, Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1B5.

Major Findings

Increase in Day Care Spaces

Since 1971, the first year Health and Welfare Canada gathered national day care data, there has been significant growth in the number of day care spaces. In 1971 there were 17 391 spaces. In 1990 there were 320 624 spaces. This represents an eighteen-fold increase.

With one or two exceptions, each subsequent year has shown a rate of growth between 10 and 16 percent. The percentage rate of growth over 1989 is down somewhat at 7.56 percent

The number of full-time day care spaces in Canada in 1990 is 320 624. This is an increase of 22 541.

Centre care spaces increased by 22 574.

Family day care spaces decreased by 33.

This significant rate of growth, although lower than in previous years as indicated in Table 1, has continued into 1990.

The overall rate of growth was 7.56 percent compared to 13.03 percent in 1989.

There was a small decrease in the number of family day care spaces representing a percentage loss of .086 over 1989.

The rate of growth for centre day care over 1989 was 8.69 percent.

Age Groups Served by Day Care Programs

As indicated in Table 2, the availability of day care services differs according to the age of the child.

As in the past, day care centre spaces are primarily being used by children between the ages of three to five years inclusive. The spaces available to this age group account for 160 678 or 56.88 percent of the total day care centre spaces.

Only 31 259 or 11.04 percent of centre spaces are filled by children under the age of three. This contrasts with the family day care where there are 15 916 spaces or 41.7 percent serving children under three.

School-age day care spaces continue to have more priority than in earlier years. There are now 95 713 spaces for this age group compared with 75 083 in 1989 and 58 007 in 1988. School-age day care now constitutes 29.85 percent of the day care spaces. However, it should be pointed out that this figure is not typical for most provinces and territories. Quebec has almost 30 000 of the 95 713 school-age spaces.

Sponsorship of Day Care Centres

In 1968, 75 percent of all day care spaces were under commercial auspices. The percentage of commercial spaces dropped over the years but for the past few years has been fairly stable – between 38 and 43 percent. However, in 1989 the non-profit sector reached a high of 64.73 percent.

The non-profit centre spaces grew by 17 505 spaces and now represent 65.76 percent of the total day care centre spaces.

The commercial sector grew by 5069 centre spaces and now represents 34.24 percent of the centre spaces.

Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution and relative growth of day care spaces under different types of sponsorship.

Day Care Spaces by Province and Territory

Table 5 shows full-time centre spaces and family day care spaces by province and territory, and Table 6 provides provincial/territorial comparisons by auspice.

Full-time Day Care Spaces in Canada in Relation to the Number of Day Care Age Children of Parents in the Labour Market

The mandate for Status of Day Care in Canada has been to show the year-by-year growth patterns in day care.

However, there has always been some interest in relating these findings to the degree of unmet need. Obviously, the data provided by the provinces does not lend itself directly to this type of analysis. The early Status of Day Care in Canada reports compared the number of full-time day care spaces to the number of children of parents in the labour force in order to roughly address this question. The problem with this

approach is that many parents work part-time and do not require full-time day care space. This creates an exaggerated impression of the degree of unmet need.

On the other hand, if only the numbers of children of two parents who work full-time are used, there may be built-in underestimations of the need, in that a parent working 20 hours a week would not likely find a part-time day care space to match the hours needed for care.

Consequently, Status of Day Care in Canada now uses a format which presents four separate compilations estimating the percentage of children that can be served by existing day care spaces. The four separate compilations are for children 0-17 months; between 18 months and under 35 months; between the ages of three to five inclusive; and between six and 12 years.

It is important to note that the above-mentioned approach compares only the number of full-time day care spaces to the number of children of various ages who belong to one of the four categories and whose parents work. It should not be construed to relate to the number of children whose parents would choose a formalized day care setting if it were available.

Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10 relate the four categories and parental work situations to the percentage of full-time day care spaces available.

The existing evidence of parental preference is sketchy at best, but it does seem to suggest that about 50 percent of those not using formalized care would do so if provided the opportunity. However, a number of variables need to be researched before definitive statements can be made.

Another consideration – a significant one, according to some field observations – is the impact of full-time kindergarten and part-time junior kindergarten in the school system on the demand for day care.

Table 2 shows that the percentage of spaces available for five-year-olds and, to a lesser extent, for four-year-olds, is significantly lower than for three-year-olds. Unfortunately, because some provinces have difficulty providing age breakdowns in the centres, we have had to rely to some extent on estimates. Therefore, the age breakdown is much less reliable than are the data on the number of spaces and the auspices of spaces. This is another area where additional research is needed.

Table 1 – Distribution of Centre Spaces, Family Day Care Spaces and Day Care Centres by Year

Number of Spaces	March 31 1971	March 31 1980	March 31 1985	March 31 1989	March 31 1990	Increase Over 1989 No.	Increase Over 1989 %
Centre Spaces	16 791	98 238	169 751	259 891	282 465	22 574	8.69
Family Day Care Spaces	600	10 903	22 623	38 192	38 159	33	0.086
Total Spaces	17 391	109 135	192 374	298 083	320 624	22 541	7.56
Day Care Centres	682	2 719	4 685	6 860	7 712	850	8.07

Table 2 – Spaces in Day Care Centres and Family Day Care Homes by Age of Children Served (1990)

Ages*	Day Care Centres No.	Day Care Centres %	Family Day Care Homes No.	Family Day Care Homes %
0-17 mos.	8 868	3.14	7 793	20.42
18-35 mos.	22 391	7.9	8 123	21.29
3 years	83 867	29.69	5 985	15.68
4 years	43 228	15.30	5 670	14.86
5 years	33 583	11.89	5 403	14.16
6-10 years	88 406	31.3	4 701	12.32
10-12 years	2 122	.75	484	1.27
Total	282 465	99.97	38 159	100.00

*Some provinces/territories are not able to provide breakdowns by ages and in such cases, estimates have been provided.

Table 3 – Sponsorship of Centre Spaces 1979, 1985, and 1990

Type of Sponsorship	1979 Spaces	1979 % of Spaces	1985 Spaces	1985 % of Spaces	1990 Spaces	1990 % of Spaces
Non-Profit	42 534	50.59	106 131	62.51	185 742	65.76
Commercial	41 549	49.41	63 631	37.49	96 723	34.07
Total	84 083	100.00	169 751	100.00	282 465	99.83

Table 4 – Sponsorship of Centre Spaces 1989 and 1990

Type of Sponsorship	1989 Spaces	1990 Spaces	Increase No.	Increase %
Non-Profit	168 237	185 742	17 505	10.40
Commercial	91 654	96 723	5 069	5.5
Total	259 891	282 465	22 574	8.7

Table 5 – Provincial/Territorial Comparison of Day Care Spaces

Provinces/Territories	Centre Spaces	Family Day Care Spaces
Newfoundland	2 402	-
Prince Edward Island	1 913	35
Nova Scotia	5 977	123
New Brunswick	5 568	96
Quebec	70 319*	7 273
Ontario	107 546	11 762
Manitoba	10 171	2 623
Saskatchewan	3 795	1 980
Alberta	54 872**	6 962
British Columbia	18 489	7 155
Northwest Territories	694	66
Yukon	719	84
National Totals	282 465	38 159

*29 107 of Quebec spaces are operated under the auspices of the Department of Education.

**Alberta provided data for pre-school spaces and municipal officials provided estimates for school-age spaces.

Table 6 – Provincial/Territorial Comparison of Day Care Centre Spaces by Auspices

Provinces/Territories	Non-Profit	Commercial	Total
Newfoundland	620	1 782	2 402
Prince Edward Island	876	1 037	1 913
Nova Scotia	3 448	2 529	5 977
New Brunswick	3 075	2 493	5 568
Quebec	59 681*	10 638	70 319
Ontario	71 368	36 178	107 546
Manitoba	9 199	972	10 171
Saskatchewan	3 795	–	3 795
Alberta	20 049	34 823	54 872
British Columbia	12 489	6 000	18 487
Northwest Territories	578	116	694
Yukon	564	155	719
National Totals	185 742	96 723	282 465

*29 107 of Quebec spaces are operated under the auspices of the Department of Education.

Table 7 – Infant Day Care – Children 0-17 Months

Category of Parent	Number of Children	% of Children Served
Mothers in labour force	307 063	5.43
Full-time working parents (1)	159 382	10.45
Full-time working parents (2) plus students	168 465	9.89
Full-time working parents (3) plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	212 191	7.85

As of March 1990 there were 16 661 full-time day care spaces for children 0-17 months of age. As can be seen from the above four compilations the percentage of children these spaces can serve differs according to which groups of parents are included in the compilation.

Table 8 – Children between the Ages of 18 Months and 35 Months

Category of Parent	Number of Children	% of Children Served
Mothers in labour force	316 277	9.65
Full-time working parents (1)	158 933	19.2
Full-time working parents (2) plus students	172 437	17.7
Full-time working parents (3) plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	221 693	13.76

As of March 1990 there were 30 514 full-time day care spaces for children between the ages of 18 months and 35 months.

Table 9 – Children between the Ages of 3 and 5 Years Inclusive

Category of Parent	Number of Children	% of Children Served
Mothers in labour force	641,893	27.7
Full-time working parents (1)	327 056	54.34
Full-time working parents (2) plus students	353 522	50.28
Full-time working parents (3) plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	453 839	39.16

As of March 1990, there were 177 736 day care spaces for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years inclusive.

Table 10 – Children between the Ages of 6 and 12 Years Inclusive

Category of Parent	Number of Children	% of Children Served
Mothers in labour force	1 720 310	5.56
Full-time working parents (1)	1 001 851	9.55
Full-time working parents (2) plus students	1 065 941	8.98
Full-time working parents (3) plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	1 305 170	7.33

As of March 1990, there were 95 713 day care spaces for school-age children.

Notes

1. This category includes lone parents working full time, and includes two-parent families in which both parents work full time.

2. This category includes the full-time working parents, lone parents who are full-time students, two-parent families in which one parent works full time and the other is a full-time student, and two-parent families in which both parents are full-time students.

3. This category includes full-time working parents, student-parents, lone parents who work 20 to 29 hours a week, two-parent families in which one parent works full time and the other works 20 to 29 hours a week, two-parent families in which both parents work 20 to 29 hours a week, and two-parent families in which one parent works 20 to 29 hours a week and the other is a full-time student.

Day Care Terminology

Centre care – Care given to groups of children in a licensed day care centre.

Commercial centre – A licensed day care centre that is set up as a proprietary operation. The term describes larger franchise operations, as well as the small, individually-owned centres.

Community board centre – A licensed day care centre that is established as a non-profit organization and is governed by a community board of directors.

Day care facility – For the purposes of this report, a licensed or provincially-approved centre or private home providing care for children outside of their own home for eight to ten hours a day.

Family day care – A program involving the selection and supervision by a government or authorized private agency of private families who give care to children during the day.

Infant day care – Care provided by a day care centre or a family day care home for children under the age of two.

Latch-key child – School-age child of working parents who carries house keys to gain entrance to home after school and before parents return from work.

Non-profit day care – For the purposes of this report, includes both community board centres and co-operative day care programs.

Preschool day care – Care provided by a day care centre or a family day care home for children aged two to six.

Private or casual day care arrangements – Arrangements between the parent and the provider, such as those involving a private baby-sitter, which are not under the supervision of a licensing authority or day care agency.

Public day care – A licensed day care centre owned and operated by a municipal or provincial/territorial government.

School-age day care – Supervision of young school-age children before school begins, during the noon hour, after class, and on days when school is not in session.